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EDUCATION
IN THE
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
DURING THE 1956-57 SCHCOL YEAR

EDUCATION IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA DURING THE 1956/57 SCHOOL YEAR

Education Day

Bulgarian education has a relatively long history. Over thousand years have elapsed since the brothers Cyril and Methodius coined the Slav script and laid the foundations of Bulgarian literature and education. The lifework of the Slav apostles found a wide echo in the lands inhabited by Bulgarians. It is in those distant days (9th century) that the first Bulgarian schools sprang up.

Even during the dark days of foreign domination the Bulgarians remained true to the cause of Cyril and Methodius. Continuously expanding the number of their schools, they developed and enriched their culture.

Hundred years ago official expression was given to the general esteem in which the Slav apostles were held: May 24 was proclaimed Slav Alphabet and Education Day. In the course of the past century this day became one of the most popular Bulgarian holidays. Every year on this day our people manifest their thirst for knowledge and education, their aspiration for cultural progress.

This year the Bulgarian people celebrated the 100th anniversary of Education Day. It is with a sense of pride that they look back on their achievements in the field of education and culture. Illiteracy has practically disappeared, at least among those below the age of 50. All children have now the opportunity to go to school. Secondary, professional and higher education has been considerably broadened. Culture and science are now accessible to the masses.

I. School Administration, Budget and Financing. School Construction.

A number of reforms were introduced recently to further raise educational and cultural standards. At the beginning of 1957 the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture were merged into the Ministry of Education and Culture. In this way, general (elementary and secondary), professional and higher education as well as all other cultural institutes and departments were placed under one direction. Now the question of the Ministry's structure is under consideration, with the aim of securing more competent and efficient school management as well as greater autonomy and initiative of the organs of education.

The sum earmarked in the 1957 Budget for preschool, elementary and secondary education is 5.5 per cent higher than in 1956. Yet in 1956 the total expenditures for education were 13.6 per cent higher than in 1955. The funds set aside for education are thus increasing from year to year. Last year the increase was effected mainly at the expense of the defense budget which was reduced in 1955 as a result of the government's peaceful policy. In this respect the measures taken by the Bulgarian government conform to the recommendations of the XVII International Conference on Education.

In 1956, 73 new schools were built, capable of accommodating 19,490 pupils. The total of new schools built during the past twelve years, ending on December 31, 1956, is 1,001. This year's target is 66 new schools. In addition, a considerable number of schools is to be built by the population with the financial aid of the state. Standard blueprints for school buildings with 5-8 class rooms are now being worked out. The newly built schools are to include, besides the class rooms, workshops and laboratories, and the larger school buildings — medical and dental offices, refreshment counter, kitchen and dining room.

II. Quantitative Development of Education

In 1956/57 the number of children attending schools and kindergartens marked a new increase. There are at present 6,650 kindergartens — half-day, day and seasonal — in

Bulgaria. In the 1956/57 school year these accommodated 276,090 children, or over 50 per cent of all preschool-age children (3-7 years old). Of these, 64,660 children, distributed in 1,847 groups, attended the 1,665 half-day kindergartens, in which children entering school the next year are accepted. Of the children admitted to the 1st grade on September 1, 1956, 47.6 per cent had passed through kindergartens — 40.6 through half-day kindergartens and 7 per cent through day kindergartens. In the 522 day kindergartens there were 25,610 children, distributed in 985 groups, and in the 4,107 seasonal kindergartens — 185,432 children, distributed in 5,693 groups.

During the current school year 1,123,171 children are going to school, i.e. 3.4 per cent more than last year. The number of children of school-going age not attending school was reduced to 3,425, or 0.36 of the total. In other words, 99.64 per cent of all children of school-going age are going to school in Bulgaria.

To make room for the many who wish to continue their education after going through elementary school, 11 new complete secondary schools and 2 gymnasiums were built, bringing the total of these schools to 293. This school year 84.5 per cent of all children with elementary school educations are continuing their studies in gymnasiums and trade schools. In 1956 the number of secondary school graduates was 16,670 as against 16,129 in 1955.

Attendance at evening schools, where adults can study without interrupting their work, increased from 20,963 to 21,061.

There are 30 special schools for children with physical and mental defects: 8 for the deaf-and-dumb, 2 for the blind, 15 for the underdeveloped and 5 for juvenile delinquents. In these state-subsidised schools, which devote much time to professional training, 2,985 children received their education.

For children predisposed to tuberculosis there are 15 climatic schools in mountain resorts and other suitable places. Living under a special regime, the children are given here a maximum of care. The number of those attending these schools was 1,270.

There are 80 orphanages, completely supported by the state and located near schools. 6,221 orphans were accommodated here during the current school year.

For children, both of whose parents are working, there are special study halls where they can prepare their lessons under the surveillance of trained teachers. In the current school year there were 225 study halls with 10,736 pupils.

The total number of pupils in all general education day schools increased this year by 2,627, or 6.1 per cent.

Inasmuch as there exists an adequate staff with proper pedagogic training, it will be possible to reorganise the school system with a view to raising its standards. There are now 2 institutions where teachers can improve their qualifications. Every teacher is given the opportunity to attend these institutions at 5-year intervals so as to acquaint himself with all that is new in his specialty as well as in methodics.

In 1956/57, 68,593 students attended trade schools (technicums and factory schools), 15,000 graduating from them in 1956.

There are now 20 universities and colleges, the same number as last year. Enrolment during 1956/57 was 37,459 as against 35,501 last year. This figure includes those taking correspondence courses. The number of university graduates in 1956 was 5,947, or 1,958 more than in 1955. Of these 1,057 were teachers. The teaching staff of colleges and universities in 1956/57 consisted of 2,889 instructors and professors as against 2,830 the previous year.

III. School Organisation and Structure of Education

In 1956 the Ministry of Education published in the press a proposal «For the further Promotion of Education». The proposals were widely discussed by the pedagogic councils in all schools and universities as well as at city, district, county and district conferences. Teachers and parents, heads of pedagogic offices and enterprises, workers and peasants, politicians and scientists took part in these discussions. Numerous articles and other material were published in the press. The main problems discussed related to: a) the overburdening of pupils, necessitating a re-examination of the whole school program with a view to eliminating all that is not strictly necessary; b) extension of the secondary education course from 11 years, as it is at present, to 12 years;

c) improvement of professional training, and gradual introduction of polytechnical training; d) improvement of teaching methods; e) intensified construction of school buildings, and f) betterment of the material base of education. Special attention was devoted to the problem of improving the school administration and reorganising the apparatus of school inspectors. A large number of valuable proposals and recommendations were made in connection with these problems.

The results of these public discussions were reviewed by a committee composed of educators, distinguished scientists from the University and Academy of Science, teachers, doctors etc. A draft decree was worked out which serves as a basis for the new school plan. The school program and the textbooks are to be revised and various measures will be taken to further improve school education.

The new methods and organisational measures for the polytechnization of education are to be tried out first in a certain number of schools. Starting with the 1957/58 school year, special courses based on agriculture such as plant- and stockbreeding, the working of machines and electrotechnics are to be introduced in these schools. The Ministry is now working out norms for the equipment of laboratories, workshops and experimental fields. The preparatory work for polytechnical education and intensified professional training is also being done at the other schools. Parents as well as the management of plants and factories take an increasing part in this work. There is considerable public interest in these problems.

By special decision of the Council of Ministers the labour reserve schools and technicums were authorised to supply schools with equipment for workshops and laboratories at cost price.

IV. School Plans, Programs and Methods.

The second stage of the 1955 school plan was introduced during the 1956/57 school year, completely in the V and VIII as well as in the VI and IX grades and partially in the VII, X and XI grades. Beginning with the 1957/58 school year,

this plan will apply to all grades. No changes in the school plan as regards subjects or number of hours were made during the current year. The school programs for all subjects have been revised on the basis of the 1955 school plan.

The teachers' institutes have been given a more practical and polytechnical slant, especially as regards subjects such as biology, physics, chemistry, geography and handwork.

A total of 120 textbooks, 7 of which are new, were published for general education schools in the 1956/57 school year. In addition, 80 textbooks were published for the Turkish schools, 4 of which are new.

The Ministry organized refresher courses for instructors in physics, chemistry and biology as well as in the beginners' course on handwork. Similar courses were organized on different subjects by the educational departments in various parts of the country. These were sometimes held in plants or technicums. Consultations on various problems as well as mutual visits between teachers for sharing experience are also practiced.

The Physical Culture and Sports Research Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Science, the Supreme Committee for Physical Culture and Sports, and the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, with the concurrence of the Ministry of Education and Culture, this year completed the 2-year scientific tests on 2,850 school children to determine the physical capacities of pupils belonging to different age groups. On the basis of these tests new programs for physical education were worked out, to be applied in general education and trade schools. These programs were experimentally introduced during the 1956/57 school year and, depending on the results, are to be revised and generally introduced next school year.

V. Teaching Staff

Bulgarian teachers receive their training in the corresponding pedagogical schools, in the University and in the pedagogical sections of the Institute of Fine Arts, Musical Conservatory and Institute of Physical Culture and Sports.

Women teachers in kindergartens are trained in pedagogical schools for children's teachers, teachers in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades — in the pedagogical schools for elementary teachers, teachers in the middle course (5th-7th grade) in the teachers' institutes, and teachers in the upper course (8th-11th grade) — in the University and the above-mentioned institutes of higher learning.

The training course in teachers' schools was increased from 4 to 5 years in the past school year. No changes were made in this respect during the current school year. The training course in the teachers' institutes is, as heretofore, 2 years. A problem now mooted is the reorganisation of teachers' schools, for teachers with a secondary education, making them 2-year courses, while extending the training in teachers' institutes from 2 to 3 years. The training course in the University was increased last year from 4 to 5 years. No further changes were made during the current school year.

The material condition of teachers was substantially improved. As of January 1, 1956, basic salaries as well as supplementary remunerations for outside work such as directing study circles, correcting homework etc. were raised. Furthermore, the 1952 Decision of the Council of Ministers, ensuring village teachers free living quarters, heating and electricity, was broadened in scope.

As of January 1, 1957, supplementary remunerations were provided for correcting homework and for teachers of elementary schools, tantamount to a salary raise of about 5.5 per cent. As of April 1, 1957, allowances for children were substantially increased. These amount now to 12 leva for 1 child, 100 leva for 2 children, 190 leva for 3 children, 90 leva for the 4th and 5th child, and 100 leva for each additional child. This measure applies to all industrial and white collar workers, teachers included.

Another substantial alleviation for all workers, including teachers, is the establishment of canteens by Decision of the Council of Ministers of June 26, 1956. Food is provided here at cost price, while all other expenditures are defrayed by the state. Thus teachers and their families are ensured good and wholesome food at very low prices. Canteens for pupils have been opened at 467 schools, while most larger schools also have refreshment counters.

VI. Auxiliary and Extracurricular Services

Outside-class and extracurricular work in schools and young pioneer homes has been considerably improved. There exist now 8,532 subject circles with 138,191 pupils and 7,725 technical circles with 122,312 pupils.

The number of technical circles has increased this year and their work has been improved. A large part of these study circles conduct their courses in plants and factories, machine-tractor stations and co-operative farms. Many of the pupils quickly master the different kinds of production and at the end of the school year some of them are classed as skilled workers.

Over 209,000 pupils joined the different sections and circles in amateur art activity. There are 465 lecture centres in the secondary schools. Over 120,000 pupils took part in contests and Olympic games. There are now 5,388 experimental fields attached to schools. This year the III. Republican Contest was held for the best work done in these experimental fields, with the participation of 1,732 schools, 2,573 young pioneer classes, 1,344 young pioneer groups, 304 biology study circles with over 30,000 individual participants.

There are 58 young pioneer homes and a Young Pioneer Palace in Sofia, where pupils spend their leisure time in a most useful and constructive way, broadening and supplementing their knowledge. Here some 40,000 pupils of the middle school-age group attend 2,000 study circles in technology, biology, amateur art activity and sports. A particularly good job is done by the technical study circles — electricity, radio, physics, chemistry, automobilism and tractorism, in which pupils not only broaden their theoretical knowledge but also learn how to handle machinery and instruments.

A central station for young technicians was opened in Sofia during this school year. Over 900 pupils, primarily of the upper grades, acquire here, under the guidance of trained specialists, most useful knowledge and practical experience in electrotechnics, radio, mechanics, thermodynamics, architecture and construction, film and photography, motorless plane modelling etc.

A national festival for school youth was held in amateur art activity, technical sciences and sports, with a nation-wide participation of over 6,000 pupils. More than 30,000 took part in the preliminary district festivals. In addition, a national exhibit of the technical and fine arts was organised at which over 3,000 models, specimens and technical devices made by pupils of the secondary and trade schools were displayed.

The numerous amateur art groups are now engaged in preparatory work for the VI World Youth Festival to be held in Moscow this summer. National reviews of amateur art were organised. Here the best trade union, library club and school ensembles and individual performers vie for the honor to represent Bulgaria at the Moscow Festival.

Various youth initiatives were organised on a nation-wide scale in honour of the World Festival. Youth Holidays, Folk Song and Dance Holidays and similar festivals were held in many factories, enterprises, towns and villages. Stress was laid here on the folklore typical of the particular region. Particularly successful was the student festival, while the troupes gave numerous public performances.

In many places the preparatory work for the Youth Festival is accompanied by youth labour initiatives on a mass scale. Youths took part in afforestation schemes, in the laying out of parks and gardens, in the construction of youth clubs and so forth.

The pre-Festival activity gave a considerable impetus to the development of amateur art and stimulated the patriotic and internationalist education of youth.

During the past year 111,395 pupils spent their summer vacation in 511 non-urban camps. Another 45,000 were accommodated in 501 urban camps. In addition, the trade unions organised 70 young pioneer camps for 20,000 pupils. The co-operative farms, on their part, organised some 500 camps for the children of their members. Highly popular among pupils who spend their summer vacation in the cities are the tourist centres.

Near Varna on the Black Sea there is an international pioneer camp, at which children from 18 countries spent their summer vacation last year. These came from Albania, Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany (both East and West), Hungary, Israel, Italy,

Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria and the USSR. This fine initiative has already assumed a traditional character. Here the children of different nations, spending a most enjoyable vacation in highly attractive surroundings, get to know and understand each other. This camp is a true school of international brotherhood.

Last summer pupils and young pioneers took an increasing part in field work. Over 80,000 pupils accumulated some 2½ million workdays to their credit, lending co-operative and state farms a highly appreciated helping hand. In this way love for physical work and useful habits are instilled in the young generation. The youth brigades also performed valuable cultural work among the village population.

This year too the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Union of Bulgarian Writers and the Dimitrov Youth Union organised the Children's Book Week which instils reading habits in the young and acquaints them with the writers.

At the initiative of the Ministry of Education, in conjunction with the Dimitrov Youth Union and the Union of Painters a contest for pupils is to be held, at which the best drawing will be awarded a prize. Other good drawings are to be exhibited in Bulgaria and abroad.

A nation-wide drive to improve sanitary conditions in schools and surround them with green areas was started last year. To this end the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Trade Union of Teachers and Journalists, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, the Dimitrov Youth Union and the Bulgarian Red Cross have organised a review, at which the national champions — schools, counties and districts — will be determined and awarded prizes. The whole population is taking part in this review. Enterprises, factories and co-operative farms have become the patrons of schools, equipping their laboratories and workshops and supporting their sanitation and gardening drive.

The recommendations and exchanges of views at the conferences of the International Educational Board and UNESCO have been most valuable. Recommendations 42 and 43 of the XIX International Conference have been studied in detail by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Practically all principles underlying recommendation No. 42 have been introduced in Bulgarian education. The aims of

inspecting have been adopted in toto by the Regulation for School Inspectors. The system of school control corresponds to the administrative and pedagogic structure prevailing in Bulgaria. The directions given in the Instruction on the Work of School Inspectors are inspired by recommendation No. 42 on the duration and method of school inspections, on the work of the inspectors with teachers etc. It is now proposed to place trade schools completely under the Ministry of Education and Culture and thus to establish closer links between the inspectors of general education schools and those of technicums.

The work of the inspectors is to be further improved by the creation of an inspectorate composed of specialists in every school subject for the middle and upper course of secondary schools.

The requirements of recommendation No. 43 regarding the aims and teaching of mathematics in secondary schools coincide with what is practiced in Bulgaria. The new school plan, which is to be worked out after settling the issues submitted to popular discussion, will also take into consideration the recommendations on the teaching of analytical geometry.

The Bulgarian people highly value their achievements in the field of education. They are firmly convinced that peace is the foremost condition for the further progress of education. They will steadfastly continue to take part in the fight for relaxation of world tension, for peace and for the peaceful use of atomic energy. The Bulgarian school is entirely devoted to these lofty aims. It educates the children in a spirit of true patriotism and international cooperation.

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